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SUBJECT: STAFFDEL BRANEGAN

Classified By: A/DCM Claud Young for reason 1.4 (g).

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member Jay Branegan visited Dakar, November 2-3, 2006, to study the processes and procedures whereby the State and Defense Departments coordinate in embassies overseas, particularly in pursuing activities related to the Global War on Terror (GWOT). In the course of two days, Mr. Branegan met with country team members, Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives, the DCM of the French Embassy, and participated in a round table discussion with senior Senegalese officers attending an Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) seminar. Coordination and cooperation were the themes that arose again and again. Senegal has avoided major terrorist incidents to date, and Branegan learned about the Mission,s model Muslim outreach program, which is one vehicle we use to help maintain Senegal,s record. END SUMMARY.

SENEGALESE MFA: OUR GOAL IS PREVENTION

¶2. (U) Senate staffer Jay Branegan called on Ambassador Claude Absa Diallo, Acting Foreign Minister and Secretary General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also present were Pape NDiaye, Director of the International Organizations Department, and the Embassy Political Counselor. The conversation was friendly, with emphasis on shared values and cooperation in combating terrorism. For counterterrorism operational details, Diallo referred Branegan to the Interior Ministry.

¶3. (C) Diallo called the U.S. more sensitive to the threat of terror because it was directly targeted, but emphasized that Senegal, as a port of entry to Africa and host to numerous international conferences, could also be a tangential victim of terrorism. She said such "secondary" terrorism could affect Senegal's transportation network and thereby mobility and logistics. Senegal was trying to take measures to prevent terror, such as augmenting Dakar airport and port security, but could use greater financial help from its friends. She added that the world as a whole needed to be aware of the terror threat, but Senegal's primary concern was that the West should not conclude that terrorism is synonymous with one culture, race, religion or region of the world.

¶4. (C) Diallo and especially NDiaye emphasized that Senegal is fully supportive of the U.S., even though its votes at the United Nations more often reflect African Union consensus rather than Senegal,s viewpoint on U.S. policy. Diallo said President Wade and President Bush shared many values, and that Wade's willingness to mediate with Iran proved this. When Branegan asked for advice for the U.S., Diallo suggested that the U.S. listen more carefully to African opinion. The U.S. is the world's only superpower, but might

be even more effective diplomatically if it were willing to take a more conciliatory approach with smaller countries.

COORDINATE AND COOPERATE TO FACILITATE PREVENTION

15. (SBU) Branegan also called on French DCM Philippe LaCoste for a wide-ranging, amicable discussion of the French perspective on Senegal, possible areas of rivalry and opportunities for cooperation. LaCoste emphasized the uniqueness of Senegal's brand of Islam, noting that Arabs found some local features strange or even un-Islamic. Senegalese students who had gone to the Arab world to study, especially countries such as Saudi Arabia, might well be returning to Senegal with the intention of reforming traditional practices. A small but telling example, LaCoste said, was Senegalese Muslims nonchalance about bowing precisely toward Mecca while praying. While there was no evidence that any Senegalese were engaged in terror, it did appear that Islamic radicals transited Dakar and were housed and supported by friendly local mosques. The threat of terror was small, but there was a need nonetheless for counter-terror measures, such as augmented port security.

16. (C) LaCoste said the economic situation in Senegal could well lead to political unrest, especially if the coming elections are perceived as unfair. Major French/European companies such as Total were very pessimistic about the Senegalese economy and small businessmen were very discouraged by overregulation and the unreliability of legal rules and judicial decisions, although LaCoste commented as a personal observation, it seemed that most French businessmen were still managing to make money. Referring to the many problems of the Sahel as a region, he emphasized that the problems were so many and resources so few, that there was plenty of room for all donors, and that it was in the

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interest of France and the U.S. to communicate and coordinate as closely as possible to avoid duplication of effort.

GOS SENIOR SECURITY AND POLICE IDENTIFY VULNERABILITIES

17. (C) Mr. Branegan also met with a group of 10 senior Senegalese officers representing the ministries of Interior, Defense, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Finance; the Presidency; the Prime Minister's Office; and the National Gendarmerie. The officers were concluding the first week of a three-week Anti-Terrorism Assistance training program titled "Integrating Counter-Terrorist Strategies at the National Level." While the group agreed that Senegal has escaped international terrorism to date, it believed that the potential is present and would most likely be sparked by elements from outside the country. They also agreed that Senegal was not fully prepared to address the problem.

18. (C) Colonel Charles Gueye, Defense Advisor to the Prime Minister and the senior GOS officer present, noted that the agency responsible, under current Senegalese law, for combating terrorism is the Ministry of the Interior. If the threat or incident is beyond the Ministry of Interior's capacity, the Gendarme, first, followed by the Senegalese Armed Forces would assist. Colonel Gueye said the law was very clear on this matter and identified a lack of interoperability, coordination, and communications between the various GOS institutions as a serious vulnerability to their response. He noted that often USG assistance was "stove-piped" to specific groups, e.g., the military or police, and reinforced this vulnerability rather than resolved it.

COMMENT

19. (U) Mr. Branegan did not have the opportunity to clear this telegram prior to his departure. However, he had the opportunity to meet with FBI and EUCOM staff during the visit and exchanged ideas with them as well as those focusing on

bilateral issues. Branegan also learned about the mission,s model Muslim outreach program, which includes working with koranic schools, sending imams and Islamic teachers to the United States, and Arabic-language book donations.

¶10. (C) While Senegal has been fortunate to escape terrorism, the potential is here. Senegal is a strong U.S. partner in the Global War on Terror. To increase the effectiveness of our counterterrorism assistance, the USG should recognize that Senegal's traditional partners, e.g., France, share our concerns, and merit closer coordination. Additionally, USG assistance, particularly the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), should acknowledge existing Senegalese law and direct assistance to the agencies that will be called to respond. Moreover, USG efforts should foster cooperation between the distinct GOS elements that will be called to respond, collectively, to any terrorist incident that occurs within the borders of Senegal. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar,s classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

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